

VZCZCXRO9660
PP RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO
DE RUEHAN #0097/01 0531305
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 221305Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3341
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0105
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0234
RHMFISS/CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ANTANANARIVO 000097

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/E - JLIDDLE
TREASURY FOR FBOYE
PARIS FOR WBAIN
LONDON FOR PLORD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MA](#)

SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR: REACTIONS TO ICG DURING AF/E VISIT

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF DOVIE HOLLAND FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

11. (C) Summary: While the International Contact Group on Madagascar was meeting in Addis Feb 18 (septel) and the African Union's Peace and Security Council was deciding to give Madagascar's leaders until March 16 to implement the power-sharing accords signed in Maputo and Addis, AF/E Deputy Director David Reimer and Emboffs met with representatives from the opposition, other embassies, the business community, and civil society on the ground in Madagascar. Almost all the interlocutors were in favor of targeted sanctions against the de facto regime. Opposition members expressed their willingness to return to the negotiating table and flexibility towards the make-up of a unity cabinet. They universally believe that the French are shoring up TGV and that he'll be forced to negotiate if the GOF more clearly withdraws its support. As of Monday, TGV has not yet publicly responded to the ICG and AU communiques, although the HAT spokesperson indicated that they would continue to pursue their plan for legislative elections. While there was some progress on the human rights front with respect to certain political prisoners Feb 16, most likely occurring in response to last week's human rights review of Madagascar by the UN, threats and intimidation are occurring against new targets. End summary.

Attitudes towards Sanctions

12. (C) Rajoelina gave a press conference Feb 17 -- on the eve of the ICG in Addis -- and stated that he was not afraid of sanctions against him, but begged the international community "not to hurt the Malagasy people". Interlocutors from other political movements derided his martyr routine in meetings with visiting AF/E Deputy Director Reimer and Emboffs, arguing that Rajoelina was not behaving like a chief of state and was obviously unable to govern this country. Rajoelina further said that he had sent his prime minister to Addis to explain the HAT's compromise proposal and that his movement was open to considering the proposals of the ICG and the AU Peace and Security Council. Although he insisted on his plan to organize constituent assembly elections in May, he asserted that they want elections to be recognized by the national and international communities.

13. (C) At a dinner for Deputy Director Reimer, several Ambassadors expressed support for moving forward with targeted sanctions, although others expressed reservations about the potential effectiveness of such maneuvers. The German Ambassador said that, as a member of the EU, France would be forced to go along with measures against the HAT,

while others had difficulty envisioning France freezing Malagasy assets or blocking their travel. The Moroccan Ambassador said that although HAT members have some assets in France, they also have assets in Mauritius and elsewhere, but didn't specify those other locations. (Note: The press has reported that those benefiting from the traffic in rosewood have created offshore accounts, into which the importers, mainly Chinese, directly deposit their proceeds. End note.) The World Bank Director is opposed to applying sanctions, even targeted sanctions, because they will cause even further economic decline. He argued that even targeted sanctions would send an extremely negative signal to the private sector that we are in this crisis for the long haul, encouraging businesses to close or stay away. He said that if the crisis continues, Madagascar will see many more enterprises folding, including Madarail and Air Madagascar. As fifty percent of the fuel is delivered from the port to the capital and significant quantities of rice are moved by train, the closure of Madarail would enormously impact distribution and prices.

14. (C) Zafy's movement leader (and "Co-President" of Madagascar) Emmanuel Rakotovahiny told Emboffs that "easy money is killing us now!", referring to the corruption that is institutionalized in the de facto regime. Targeted sanctions could help bring some accountability to politicians who now act with impunity. Presidential hopeful Pierrot Rajaonarivelo also told Emboffs that he supported targeted sanctions and recommended that the international community impose a dialogue. Ravalomanana's movement is unequivocally in favor of sanctions, while the business community is

ANTANANARI 00000097 002 OF 004

divided. In a discussion with Reimer, the American Chamber of Commerce Board explained that the main business chambers have, on the surface, remained apolitical because they are split down the middle. Although many are losing because of the economic deterioration, others have gained following the change of government. (Note: This is true for U.S. investors, as well. Brinks, who was blocked routinely by Ravalomanana due to his enmity towards its local partner, Sipromad, is now functioning normally. U.S. flour miller Seaboard, which pulled out because it couldn't compete with Ravalomanana's subsidized mill, told the ambassador last week that they are considering re-entering the market. End note.) During a civil society roundtable with Reimer Feb 18, participants all expressed support for targeted sanctions and questioned why such measures had not been already adopted, rather than aid and AGOA cuts which had hurt the poor who lack social safety nets. Reimer explained that the decision to suspend AGOA was based on a legal imperative.

Reactions to ICG: The Opposition is Willing to Negotiate

15. (C) Leader of the Ravalomanana movement (and the other "Co-President" under the Addis agreement), Fetison Andrianirina, expressed gratitude for the support of the U.S. at the ICG, but was disappointed that the ICG communique coming out of the Feb 18 meeting in Addis did not immediately call for targeted sanctions against the HAT. Ravalomanana issued an open letter Feb 18 to the members of the AU Peace and Security Council encouraging them, at their Feb 19 session, to carefully target sanctions against the illegal regime, but not to cause further hardship to the Malagasy people. Fetison was also disappointed that the AU decided to give the HAT until March 16 to implement the Maputo accords before applying targeted sanctions, as he is pessimistic about the HAT yielding in the interim. As proposed by the AU, these new sanctions would become effective on the one-year anniversary of the coup.

16. (C) Despite some frustration with the prospect of returning to negotiations after having already negotiated a consensual solution in Maputo and Addis, all sides appear willing to talk further. Zafy's Co-President Rakotovahiny told AF/E Deputy Director and Charge Feb 18 that his movement

was willing to discuss new proposals, as long as they were within the framework of the Maputo charter. While he said that Zafy would not be willing to accept HAT prime minister Vital, with whom Zafy has refused to even meet, as the "consensus prime minister", he did say Zafy would be flexible with respect to the naming of ministers and proposed that each movement provide a few names for each post and let the consensus PM -- whoever s/he is -- decide. He argued that the international community should be more directly involved in the cabinet division negotiations this time to ensure that they did not stall as before, as the situation is "far from stable". (Note: Zafy's reported desire for more international involvement is ironic, as Zafy was the most incensed among the four movement leaders when the UN's Tiebile Drame returned to Antananarivo after Addis in November to widow the unity government. End note.) Mamy Rakotoarivelo, Ravalomanana's designate for transition congress president, told Emboffs Feb 18 that his movement agreed with the compromise proposal that AU Chairman Ping had submitted to them. He asserted that they are ready to make further concessions if Ping demands it. According to Rakotoarivelo, the Ravalomanana movement is flexible regarding the unity cabinet make-up. He said that it didn't matter which ministries they got, as long as each movement got one ministry of national sovereignty. Their first priority is an amnesty law, that would erase a conviction against Ravalomanana. Ravalomanana movement leader Fetison agreed separately that he was willing to negotiate and again offered himself up as the sacrificial lamb if ceding his part of the co-presidency would advance negotiations.

17. (C) As of Monday, Rajoelina still has not publicly responded yet to the ICG and AU communiques of Feb 18 and 19. However, HAT spokesperson Annick Rajaona insisted on Feb 21 that their idea of organizing elections was incontrovertible, and the press speculated that Rajoelina would not accept a return to Maputo as that would discredit him. Rumors were circulating on Feb 22 that Rajoelina would replace his

ANTANANARI 00000097 003 OF 004

foreign minister, following the resignation of Ny Hasina Andriamanjato 10 days ago, with Maxime Zafera, Ratsiraka's former Ambassador to Switzerland and currently a senior advisor to HAT PM Vital (whom he accompanied to Addis last week). Appointing new members to his unilateral cabinet would be an early sign that Rajoelina is not planning to implement power sharing.

All Blame the French

18. (C) Mamy Rakotoarivelo, Ravalomanana's designate for transition congress president, asserted to Emboffs Feb 18 that Rajoelina has continued his quest to govern solely, without respecting the Maputo accords, because of France's ambiguous position. He espoused the popular belief that France does not want Ravalomanana to return, so therefore, does not condemn Rajoelina's actions. Rakotoarivelo argued that if France adopted a firm position against TGV, who "is possibly reasonable", he would not be able to continue his unilateralism. Rakotoarivelo decried France's continued military cooperation, albeit in fact insignificant, as symbolically detrimental. Zafy's movement leader Rakotovahiny asserted that French FonMin Kouchner recently visited the Congo, current SADC President, to lobby Kabila to support TGV at the AU. Many share the sentiment that any popularity Rajoelina may have had in the capital city has greatly diminished, and that he is being shored up by the French. Rakotovahiny describe the 44 members of the HAT as mere opportunists who did not hold allegiance to TGV, or to the previous administrations with which they were affiliated. Members of the AmCham Board noted that the French are "throwing money around to whoever has a project", so the HAT believes it can carry on without other donor support.

HAT on Human Rights: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back

19. (C) On February 16, likely spurred by the UN Human Rights Commission's Universal Periodic Review of Madagascar, the Malagasy authorities released two political prisoners (journalists on a pro-Ravalomanana radio station) from detention pending trial and lifted the arrest warrant against Ravalomanana's appointed Co-President, Fetison Andrianirina. While this was heralded as progress, the authorities continued to take measures to repress the freedom of speech and assembly of others. Fetison told Reimer and Charge Feb 19 that the government was pressuring the Malagasy Chamber of Commerce to cancel its contract with Ravalomanana's company TIKO for the Magro lot where peaceful, almost daily opposition rallies continue to be held. Furthermore, the authorities told the Protestant association, FJKM -- closely allied with Ravalomanana -- that it must obtain approval before holding prayer meetings/political rallies on its private property in the center of Antananarivo. According to Fetison, 12 law enforcement personnel attempted to arrest the leader of this movement the night of Feb 18, but he fled his house before they could arrest him. The "Ecclesiastical Movement", mainly made up of FJKM pastors, held a prayer meeting/political rally in conjunction with the Ravalomanana movement on Feb 20. They were denied permission to hold it at the main stadium downtown, but were authorized to use a stadium in the suburbs.

Comment: The Military Must be Reassured

10. (C) Rajoelina will likely not be able to weather the imposition of sanctions. The HAT is imploding already and the economic situation continues to deteriorate rapidly. The state's predatorial actions towards businesses are generating growing support for a resumption of law and order, even among some business owners who helped finance the coup. The loss of AGOA has already provoked around 15,000 lost jobs and will cause another 30 to 40,000 in the next two months. Support for TGV is waning; however, current military leaders (and TGV himself) are frightened by a possible return of Ravalomanana to power and the revenge they anticipate he would seek against them. Coastal hardliners loosely aligned with TGV, including Marson Evariste, have stated that they'd rather have sanctions applied than Ravalomanana back. The French are also opposed to Ravalomanana's return, fearing the likely chaos that would ensue following a disintegration of the HAT into competing factions. Ravalomanana movement leader

ANTANANARI 00000097 004 OF 004

Fetison Andrianirina also shares this concern and told Emboffs that TGV should be maintained through the transition to hold his followers together. What the HAT without him is, is a good question. If the military leaders could be reassured of their safety and their positions, they would likely withdraw their support from TGV, forcing him, or his successor, into renewed negotiations. Fetison told us he has encouraged Ravalomanana to publicly announce that he won't run in the next presidential election, but to no avail, and has requested USG support for convincing his stubborn boss.

Comment continued: Will anyone go to the streets?

11. (C) None of the opposition figures met by Emboffs over the last week were willing to predict when, or even whether, there might be a truly popular response against the mis-governance of the HAT and Rajoelina, even after further sanctions or further deterioration of the economic situation. One leader said, "it could be three days, three months, or three years from now," as the Malagasy people are remarkably tolerant, and equally unpredictable. All invoked at one time or another the menace of "social explosion" or "civil war," but when asked to define who against what, or how, none could elaborate. Rental crowds from one side or another continue to be a possibility (as in the past), but what either side could gain from renewed violent confrontation or violence attributable to them is unclear. End comment.

STROMAYER